Advocacy Action Guide

A ToolKit for Strategic Policy Advocacy Campaigns

Strong Partnership Coordination: A 5-Step Process

Global Health Advocacy Incubator
Changing Policies to Save Lives

Strong Partnership Coordination:
A 5-Step Process

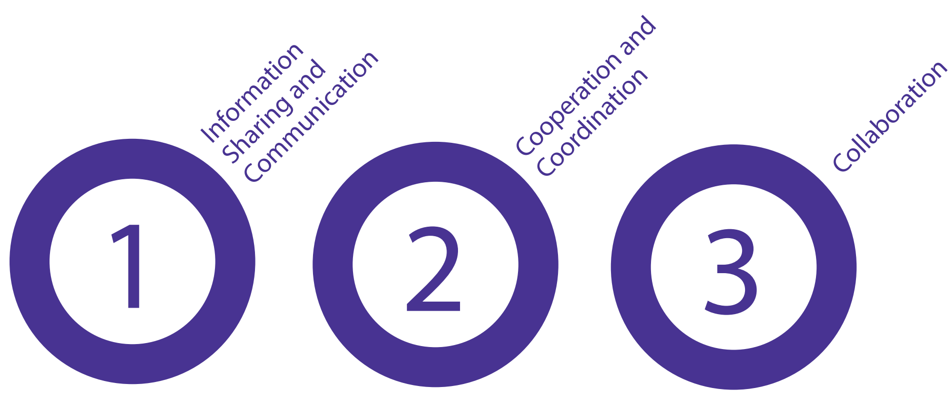
Why is it important?

Successful policy advocacy campaigns often result from a group of organizations working together toward a common goal. Collaboration is valuable because it will help you reach and persuade a wider set of decision-makers and influencers, increase resources, strengthen your legitimacy with target audiences, and add specific skillsets and expertise — potentially filling your organizational gaps.

By adding organizations you can expand the scale and diversity of support for your issue, especially if partners are from different sectors. Effective public health campaigns often engage a range of civil society, professional and business groups from the health, education, economic/employment, and scientific/research sectors. Human rights groups may also be powerful allies.

Ways of working together

There is a spectrum of different types of cooperative working, what will be appropriate for you will depend on how much your aims and objectives align. If you are working on the drink driving side of road safety and another organization is working on child safety and yet another organization working on cyclist safety; you might want to share information but you probably wouldn't have a coordinated campaign.



However you decide to work with others, you should engage in sharing information and regular communication with one another. By exchanging information you can make sure you know when other NGO's active in road safety are having events or launching reports so that you can support each other and not compete.

It will not help your campaign if other organizations are asking the same parliamentarians for different legislative changes in road safety at the same time. This is why it is advisable to go one step further than just sharing information, and to be formally cooperating and coordinating. If you can harmonize what you are asking for so that you are all focusing on the same aim, then you are giving law makers a much clearer message, which in turn makes it much harder for them to avoid taking action. When your advocacy aims are completely aligned then it is possible to be in a collaborative partnership.

If your aims are the same, and you are each bringing different skills to the table, then sharing resources and helping one another becomes the natural path.

Level	Activities
Level 1: Information Sharing and Communication	• Talk with one another • Willingness to help on an ad hoc basis • Share information
Level 2: Cooperation and Coordination	• Undertake joint planning on specific campaign components • Coordination meetings • Factor in what partners are doing when planning and operating campaigns
Level 3: Collaboration	• Informal/Formal joint planning • Joint activities and events • Joint statements, press releases, and/or briefing documents • Defined roles and responsibilities between different organizations sharing different roles within a campaign

What needs to be done?

Effective campaigns often combine a broad group of high-level organizations and individuals with a smaller core group of organizations that have more time and resources to “drive” the campaign.

Steps for working together collaboratively include:

1. Identify your campaign’s leadership team.

This core group will drive advocacy strategy and make sure that day-to-day actions are completed. Keep in mind that the core group does not always need to include the same members. Different organizations can be more involved at certain points in the campaign.

2. Agree on how you will work together.

Once you have identified your core group, meet to determine how you will work together. Establish objectives and assign the activities you each will perform. Work out a system of collaboration that will fit your group. If this isn’t clear from the beginning, disagreements may come up during the height of the campaign. Once you have agreed on how you will work together, write it down and share it among the group.

Also, it is very important that everyone in the group understands the campaign vision, goals and policy objectives. Ideally, you will want to build consensus. However, if this is not possible, having open discussions ahead of time will help the group to understand the positions of each member, allowing individuals to opt out of certain activities without causing disruptions.

3. Determine campaign chairs.

Having a chair or co-chairs to lead the core group is essential. A chairperson's responsibilities include scheduling meetings, drafting agendas, chairing meetings, sharing minutes and making sure that people follow up on their action points. When you are chairing a campaign, keep in mind that:

- You are working for the good of the campaign. The more you work with people and make them feel important and respected, the harder they will work for the campaign.
- You do not have the power to make decisions on behalf of the group. You have to support and lead the group to take decisions together, which is often much harder and requires diplomacy.

4. Identify additional partners.

Campaigns require a wide range of skills and expertise. The more partners in your campaign, the more likely it is that you will be able to handle any scenarios that arise. Remember though that it's not the number of partners but the range of expertise and level of commitment that will lead to success.

It is useful for the core group to brainstorm organizations that can strengthen your team. Do you have any skill gaps in your core group? If so, how can you address these gaps by bringing new organizations on board? Similarly, what resources are needed to achieve your policy goals and how will collaborating with others bolster those resources?

5. Identify sub-groups as needed. (Optional)

Depending on your number of campaign partners and their areas of expertise, you might want to split into sub-working groups. Some examples include media or communications, grassroots mobilization, and lobbying. Sub-groups can be particularly important at times of heightened activity. Or you may choose to have sub-groups operating throughout your campaign. Either way it's important for sub-groups to share their outcomes and decisions with the full partnership.

HELPFUL HINT:

While there are many benefits to working collaboratively, they can also bring challenges. Having too many partners can undermine your advocacy strategy, lead to ineffective communication, and cause a lack of cohesion. Sometimes competition between partners may arise. Luckily, these challenges can be overcome through careful planning and collaboration.

Building a Core Group Checklist

Before embarking on political mapping or strategic planning, you need two things in place: 1) your campaign's leadership team and 2) a plan for how you will work together. Follow this simple checklist to ensure cooperation and coordination among your campaign leadership team. The same checklist can also be applied to your campaign's larger partnership if you choose.

☑ Identify your Campaign Leadership Team

- ☒ Your campaign leadership team should be made up of no more than five to seven organizations. Otherwise, it can be difficult to reach consensus and/or make quick decisions. Include each organization's primary representative. Remember that your core group may change over time.

Organization	Representative
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

☑ Determine Policy Objective

- ☒ Your policy objective describes the change you want to see happen and helps to identify the actions needed to achieve it. While the core team does not have to agree on all aspects of a campaign, it is important to reach consensus on the policy objective since it provides the overall strategic direction.

  Make sure your objectives are linked to policy change and existing evidence, and that they include the following: a policy actor(s) or decision-maker(s), the action or decision you want them to take, and a timeline by which you want them to act or decide. The Setting Policy Priorities tool provides guidance on how to develop clear policy objectives.

Policy Objective:

☑ Determine Group Communications

☒ Your core group should determine how you will communicate with each other – email list, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, or some combination – and how often. Consistent communication among all core members will serve to strengthen your campaign. You may choose to increase or decrease the frequency of communication as necessary.

When we will communicate?	How we will communicate?

HELPFUL HINT:

It is also imperative to plan how you are going to communicate in times of crisis. Who will be involved in decision-making? What process will determine if a rapid response is required? What actions will be taken to mitigate it? The tool Managing Risks and Crises tool can help your core group with risk assessment and crisis management planning, including developing crisis communication processes.

☑ Agree on Responsibilities

☒ It can be helpful to develop an outline of what each member of the campaign steering committee will be responsible for and how they will fulfill their commitment. (This may include financial obligations.) Have all organizations formally endorse the terms of reference.

The roles and functions of the Campaign Steering Committee are defined as:

☑ Identify Chairpersons

- ☒ Every group needs to have a leader and every meeting needs to have a chairperson. This position can rotate between organizations or it can be fixed. Either way it is essential to always have someone filling this role. Chairpersons can be selected via an election, volunteering, or being nominated.

Chairperson(s): Term:

☑ Identify Additional Partners.

- ☒ Congratulations! Your core group is solidified. It is now time to identify and recruit additional partners for your campaign. Ideally, this will be done as part of a larger campaign action planning process. The Strategic Planning: How to Guide tool has a section on identifying broader partners expressly for this purpose. First, though, it is helpful to answer the following questions to help guide your partner selection. Use the following questions to assess your core group's strengths and gaps then brainstorm potential partners to fill in the gaps.

1. What are our biggest assets and gaps as a core group?
   Which partners might fill our gap areas?

2. Which partners have access to our policy targets and/or the strongest influence with our policy targets?

3. Which partners mobilize the public and stakeholders to speak out on our issue?

4. Which partners can get media attention on the issue?

5. Which partners are allies? Have we have worked with them before?

6. Which partners have available funds or resources?

7. Which partners have something to gain by collaborating with us?

8. Which partners do we have direct access to?